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ABSTRACT

This report synthesizes recommendations on future youth employment policy that emerged from a series of 10 regional Policy Forums sponsored by the National Youth Practitioners' Network. Introductory information lists the sessions and the five discussion questions on the agenda at 10 forums. These three general recommendations are then discussed: the youth unemployment problem will not go away or cure itself, long term developmental needs of young people are different from the more immediate job placement needs of adults, and creation of a separate youth title/tier within a consolidated employment and training program is the most effective way to ensure adequate service to youth. Specific recommendations for the discussion questions follow, including (1) targeting to ensure availability of funds to serve those in greatest need and prescribed eligibility criteria; (2) comprehensive program approaches with a wide range of allowable program activities, local institutional collaboration, and forward funding; (3) expanded private sector involvement; (4) developmental approach to youth programming and performance-based management system; and (5) local control of employment and training programs. Appendixes, amounting to over one-half of the report, include background notes on youth unemployment, network background notes, and questions and answers on Youth Practitioners' Network. (An executive summary precedes the report.) (YLB)

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Focusing Better on Youth:

Legislative Recommendations from the Field

A Report

from

The National Youth Practitioners' Network

Center for Public Service
The Heller Graduate School
Brandeis University
January 1982

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The ten Youth Policy Forums discussed in this report, and the preparation of the report itself, were supported primarily by a grant from the United States Department of Labor (Grant #28-25-81-02) and in part by a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation. The Forums were organized and conducted by the National Youth Practitioners' Network through the Center for Public Service of Brandeis University's Heller Graduate School. Center Director Erik Payne Butler and staff members Janet Craig, Ellen Goltsis, Ellen Kaminow, Brenda Lee-Walker, Al McMahill, and Robert Schwartz organized and conducted the Forums and were assisted by Steering Committee member Rob Ivry in the preparation of this report. All 208 participants were given an opportunity to comment on a final draft of the substantive text. The Network's National Steering Committee commented on an earlier draft of recommendations and its members helped to organize the Forum meetings themselves.

The recommendations and opinions expressed in this Report represent to the best of our ability the views of Forum participants, and therefore of the National Youth Practitioners' Network, but not necessarily those of either the Rockefeller Foundation or the U.S. Department of Labor. For more information, contact:

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Employment and training policy will receive a good deal of national legislative attention in 1982. With CETA due to expire on September 30, 1982, a deepening recession, and unemployment rates approaching 9% (exceeding 40% for Black teenagers) both the Administration and Congress are expected to support legislation that will shape future employment and training programs for this country. Legislation has already been introduced in the House and Senate that provides the foundation for the debate in the next few months and the policy for the next several years. There is reassuring consensus that some federal involvement in employment and training programs should continue. While most policymakers agree on the need to balance between economic necessity (training in areas of skill shortages) and social equity (assisting the disadvantaged and structurally unemployed achieve marketable job skills, employment, and economic self-sufficiency), there is less agreement on program approaches, service delivery structure, and requirements for coordination among local institutions. Frustratingly, no articulated consensus has yet emerged regarding the particular needs of youth, although some policymakers acknowledge the problem. It is not surprising, therefore, that more work needs to be done on the relationship of youth policy to the larger context of employment and training policy, and, as importantly,to broader educational policy.

The individuals who comprise the National Youth Pracitioners' Network have come to feel that those who are most directly involved in managing and operating local youth employment and training and education programs can play a constructive role in the formulation of future youth policy. Practitioners are closest to the problems that confront young people both in the classroom and at the workplace and can therefore offer recommendations grounded in practical, front-line experience. As representatives from state

and local government agencies, schools, community-based organizations, and private employers, we have stepped outside of our institutional identities to strive for one common goal -- to improve the effectiveness and quality of youth education and employment programs in our local communities.

In order to help accomplish this goal, we have come together to form the National Youth Practitioners' Network, coordinated by Brandeis University's Center for Public Service. The Network is a voluntary organization that functions as a self-help group, built on the donated time of its membership and motivated by the common desire to assist youth to find a productive place in the world of work. Network activities focus on conducting structured peer program assistance visits, professional staff development, and reviewing emerging national and local policies. In order to help provide local input into the forthcoming legislative initiatives that are being developed by Congressional and Administration staff, the Network sponsored a series of 10 Youth Policy Forums in all regions of the country. Over 200 Youth Practitioners attended these Policy Forums and discussed the following key questions:

- Who should be served by youth employment programs?
- Which program approaches work best, and how can they be improved?
- How involved is the private sector in youth programs and how can this be expanded?
- What should be the goals of youth employment programs and how should they be measured?

Given the current debate on future employment and training systems, a fifth question was also considered by the Network's National Steering Committee:

- What political and administrative structures will best achieve the national and local objectives for youth employment and education programs?

This report presents the recommendations that emerged from these Forums. Despite the diversity of organizations represented

at the Policy Forums, consensus was reached on eleven key themes that should guide future legislative initiatives:

- Youth unemployment is a problem of serious dimension bordering on a national crisis. The prognosis for the 1980's is not an optimistic one -- joblessness among disadvantaged and minority youth is expected to increase.

- Employers are facing skill shortages which will require better-prepared employees who are equipped with attributes and skills which will allow them to function over the long-run, not just in early, entry-level jobs.

- The long term developmental needs of young people are different from the more immediate job placement needs of adults. Different service strategies are needed to help youth overcome their educational and employment deficiencies and achieve the competencies necessary for permanent, career-related jobs.

- The lessons of the past should guide the policies of tomorrow. Future legislation concerning youth education and employment should build on the lessons that have emerged out of past legislative initiatives that focused on youth (YEDPA, Vocational Education Act, ESEA, Career Education Act, etc.). We do not have time to re-invent every wheel.

- A national commitment to youth employment must continue. A separate youth title or youth tier within a consolidated employment and training program is essential to insure that a fair share of available resources is targeted to youth and that the range of allowable activities is broad enough to effectively address the developmental needs of young people.

- With anticipated funding limitations, targeting is necessary both for funds allocation and for individual eligibility. Distribution of funds needs to be weighted toward geographic areas where the youth unemployment problem is most pronounced. In addition income eligibility criteria need to be established that still permit local discretion to target to subgroups within the eligible youth population.

- Local partnerships and institutional collaboration need to be fostered to insure that the limited funding available is used as efficiently and effectively as possible. This can best be accomplished through reciprocal funding or matching arrangements between local institutions or through a system of incentive funding that rewards the establishment of local partnerships and linkages with supplemental funding awards.

- Additional incentives are needed to increase the the participation of the business community in the formulation of local youth programs and increase the access of youth to jobs in the private sector. Strategies need to be authorized that open up job opportunities for youth in the private sector while minimizing the risks to employers (through, for example, private sector work experience at full subsidy for a limited duration, private sector out-stationing, etc.).

- The goals of youth programs should focus on the development of competencies needed for future employment. Performance standards for youth programs need to measure success according to the achievement of these skill competencies.

- The best delivery system maximizes local flexibility and local accountability so that programs can be developed that are most responsive to the particular youth needs of the local community. A locally--based managerial structure with the ability to plan ahead, with dependable resources and improved management will best enhance local delivery of services to young people. Elaborate new structures will simply cloud the issue and hamper program effectiveness.

- Practitioners are available and eager to help. There is a constructive role for youth program operators to play in developing future youth policy and their continuous input needs to be encouraged.

These recommendations reflect the experience and knowledge of those who work most directly with the problem and are most likely to play a practical role in managing solutions.

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

This report synthesizes the recommendations on future youth employment policy that emerged from a series of 10 regional Policy Forums sponsored by the National Youth Practitioners' Network. The purpose of these ten meetings was to provide an opportunity for youth practitioners -- those directly involved in managing local education and employment programs -- to offer their knowledge, experience, and perspective to Congressional and Administration staff members who are developing future employment and training programs for this country. The 208 practitioners -- representing schools, state and local government, community organizations, and private employers -- who participated in these Forums reached agreement on a common set of issues that they consider vital for improving the quality and effectiveness of local employment and educational programs. These recommendations form the core of this report.

With a formal membership of nearly 300 local youth program operators, the Youth Practitioners' Network seeks to find new ways for these practitioners to help each other improve the quality of local youth programs. The Youth Policy Forums provide one avenue by giving practitioners an opportunity to consider the formulation of future employment and training policy. Several other activities are sponsored by the Network that provide opportunities for practitioners to interact, exchange ideas, and seek solutions to the pressing problems that confront disadvantaged youth. Peer program assistance visits enable practitioners to learn from each other's knowledge and experience and adapt the successful programs and practices in one community to another. Some 100 local and state managers attend week-long Management Institutes each year which provide training in youth policy and in advanced techniques for improving program management.

Developed by Brandeis University's Center for Public Service, the Network has organized itself into ten regional groups, each coordinated voluntarily by two practitioners. National Network activities are coordinated by a National Steering Committee, a group of 30 practitioners that function in an advisory capacity to guide the Network's activities.

The 10 Youth Policy Forums were aimed at generating local input into emerging youth employment and policy options. 208 youth practitioners from throughout the country attended these one-day sessions:

DATE	REGION	LOCATION	NO. OF PARTICIPANTS
Oct. 27	Region VIII	Denver, CO	16
Oct. 30	Region I	Boston, MA	20
Nov. 5	Region III	Washington, DC	26
Nov. 10	Region V/VII	Chicago, IL	23
Nov. 19-20	National Steering Committee	Santa Barbara, CA	21
Nov. 24	Region IX	Los Angeles, CA	18
Dec. 1	Region VI	Dallas, TX	16
Dec. 2	Region II	New York City, NY	21
Dec. 4	Region IV	Atlanta, GA	20
Dec. 10	Region X	Seattle, WA	27
		TOTAL	208

Regional coordinators helped to organize the Forums, identified and invited participants from each region, and worked with Brandeis' staff to conduct the meetings. All 10 Policy Forums addressed the same agenda, which consisted of

the following discusion questions drawn from conversations with Department of Labor and Congressional officials:

1. Who should be served by youth employment programs?

   (a) Are the programs adequately targeted now? Do existing eligibility criteria make sense?

   (b) Should these questions be answered at the local level? How much local discretion can co-exist with federal responsibilities?

   (c) Programs which succeed and which appeal to the private sector may be accused of "creaming." How should this issue be addressed?

   (d) Are there new methods for targeting funds? For example, would it be more efficient to allocate funds only to geographic areas with a high percentage of the disadvantaged, but not require individual means tests for service? Could this be linked with the 'enterprise zone' idea?

   (e) What program approaches work best for the most difficult youth populations, like ex-offenders and ex-addicts? These tend to be expensive programs. Is it reasonable to spend most youth money on programs with high unit costs?

2. How involved is the private sector in youth programs and how can this be expanded?

   (a) Has there been a trend towards more private sector involvement?

   (b) Many financial incentives have been tried in recent years to stimulate this involvement. Have they worked? TJTC? Entitlement wage subsidy?

   (c) Will the new emphasis on placements in the private sector create unanticipated problems for youth programs whose outcomes are more developmental? Does this suggest different approaches to business?

   (d) What can we learn from voluntary private sector programs? Can these be replicated?

   (e) Could the vocational exploration program be made

into a flexible tool for year round application?

(f) What role have Private Industry Councils played in serving youth?

3. Are there new training and education methods which might produce significant improvements in the next few years?

(a) Is computer-based instruction sufficiently de-bugged to be an important remedial method? What will be the impact of the data revolution on jobs, youth, and the programs which link them?

(b) What pitfalls are there in vestibule training for expanding public sector jobs, like the military? Is this a useful role for the employment and training system?

(c) Job search models are less expensive than traditional programs and purport to be more effective at moving youth into the private sector. Is this true? For whom do they work best?

(d) Are there ways to increase the number of youth in OJT?

(e) Alternative education has been shown to be an effective and inexpensive way to reach out-of-school youth. How can these programs be incorporated better by local school systems?

4. What should be the goals of youth programs and how should they be measured?

(a) What are the basic skills for employment? How can employers be involved in determining them?

(b) How can tighter performance standards be imbued throughout the system, from prime sponsor to contractor to youth? Are there straightforward models in place which can be used to guide and monitor this process? What have we learned from CYEP?

(c) What is the best way to get private companies

to buy into youth programs? What steps are necessary to create a system credible enough to sustain private sector interest?

(d) Performance-based contracting is one tool for better management. How can true incentives be made a part of these contracts? What obstacles stand in the way of more wide-spread use of this technique?

(e) Can competency-based education approaches reach more young people with better results? What local examples of this are there?

(f) What regulatory or administrative changes would be needed in order to make the employment and training system more competitive and more enterprising?

Because of the debate over the structure of Federal-state-local-private sector relations in a new or revised system of service delivery, the National Steering Committee considered a fifth set of questions:

5. What should be the structure for planning and managing employment and training programs?

(a) Should there be a separate youth emphasis? If so, should it be a separate Act? A separate title within umbrella legislation? Or should local officials be able to decide whether to provide youth services and how much?

(b) Should the current system of prime sponsors under strong federal direction be maintained and strengthened? What about the "reputation" of CETA? How different does a new system need to look?

(c) What effect would changing to a system of block grants to states have on delivery of local services?

(d) Some people have argued for a new "labor market intermediary" which ignores political jurisdiction and organizes employment and training by labor

markets -- perhaps metropolitan. Does this make sense? Is it managerially feasible? Is it politically possible?

(e) Others have urged the merger of youth employment programs with vocational education programs. What are the pluses and minuses of such a move?

Not all the questions were answered, and, as the reader might expect, consensus was not achieved on every issue. However, despite the complexity of the issues, practitioners were able to reach agreement in a number of salient points that ought to guide future youth employment policy. These are summarized in the balance of this report.

I. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Youth practitioners reached agreement on three fundamental principles that provide a framework for the specific recommendations which follow:

A. <u>The youth unemployment problem is not going to go away or cure itself with the passage of the "baby boom" generation into adulthood.</u>

Youth unemployment persists as a problem of serious dimensions. The prognosis for the 1980s is that while employment rates for young people as a whole may improve, joblessness will <u>worsen</u> for minority and disadvantaged youth. Other trends compound this teenage unemployment problem. The mismatch between employer needs and employee skills is widening. And with apparently dwindling resources, the public sector will be even more limited in its ability to respond to the problem than was the case in the 1970s.

Problems which present themselves during the transition

from school to work occur disproportionately among young Blacks and young Hispanics. Unemployment rates for young Blacks are three to four times higher than for Whites, and in some locations this disparity is even greater. Youth employment legislation must address itself to this issue.

B. The long term developmental needs of young people are different from the more immediate job placement needs of adults.

Youth unemployment must be viewed as a structural problem requiring long-term solutions. The major objective of federal education, training and employment programs for youth should be to improve their long-term employability; i.e., their basic education, work habits and attitudes, ability to absorb new skills on the job and other competencies which permit successful integration into the regular work force. Both education and employment training legislation should support and encourage programmatic approaches which are responsive to the broad developmental needs of young people. Barriers to such an approach, such as excessive limits on the length of program participation or types of programs allowed, should be eliminated. Practitioners urge that education legislation soon be developed which will be carefully coordinated with employment and training legislation currently being considered.

C. The most effective way to insure adequate levels of service to young people is through the creation of a separate youth title or a separate youth tier within a consolidated employment and training program.

Since the youth unemployment problem is a structural one requiring long-term intervention, a separate legislative provision is essential. A separate youth title or youth tier in employment legislation is needed not only to provide a minimal level of funding support but also to recognize formally that youth needs are different

from adult needs. As a consequence, different types of performance standards are needed to measure the effectiveness of youth programs.

The above principles provide the foundation for the specific recommendations which follow.

II. WHO SHOULD BE SERVED BY YOUTH EMPLOYMENT RPOGRAMS?

Considering the likely limitations on the availability of public funding, practitioners believe that targeting will be necessary to ensure that the funds available are used to serve those in greatest need. Legislatively, targeting can best be achieved in two ways -- through an allocation formula that distributes funds to areas where the problem is most severe and through the establishment of clearly defined eligibility criteria. However, Network members, while supportive of targeting, also expressed the importance of creating a balance between legislative mandate and local flexibility. Legislation should establish parameters for eligibility without precluding the possibility of further targeting to specific sub-groups within the eligible popluation based upon local conditions. Moreover, multiple eligibility criteria for different youth programs should be eliminated in future legislation: there should be one set of unified, legislatively prescribed eligibility criteria for all programs.

Specifically, the Network urges consideration of the following:

A. Eligibility Criteria -- the Network supports these eligibility criteria for youth employment programs:

- Ages 14-21 inclusive.
- In-school and out-of-school youth both qualify.

- Family income not to exceed 100% of the BLS lower-living standard.
- Although practitioners believe that income remains the best available proxy for determining client need, up to 20% of funds available could be used at local discretion for services to target group applicants with non-income-based barriers to employment -- handicapped youth, ex-offenders, single parents, irregular school attenders and dropouts, non-English-speaking youth, etc.

B. Allocation Formula -- Network members urge the development of an accurate and reliable allocation formula as an important ingredient of any targeting strategy: funds should be allocated geographically based on indicators of youth need -- i.e., youth unemployment rates, youth/adult employment differential rates, etc.

III. WHAT PROGRAM APPROACHES WORK BEST AND HOW CAN THEY BE IMPROVED?

Practitioners strongly believe that policy should not be created in a vacuum: the lessons of the past should be used to influence and guide the policies of tomorrow. Progress and improvements in youth programming can only be achieved by building on our collective experience and base of knowledge. One of the clear lessons that emerged from the last four years of experience with the Youth Employment and Demonstration Projects Act of 1977 (YEDPA) is that the youth population is not homogeneous. Consequently, no single program approach will work for all youth, and no single group can or should be served to the exclusion of others. Legislation should support comprehensive program approaches based on the broad developmental needs of young people, including the full range of possible services as determined locally. While not every youth will need every possible service, it is clear that many youth need a variety of supports, often sequentially arranged, to reach an acceptable level of employability. Moreover, this

array of services can be provided by a host of local institutions, from local government entities like prime sponsors to schools, community-based agencies and employers. Whatever legislative provisions emerge, such diversity within the youth population must be recognized and incentives created to foster collaboration among institutions at the local level.

Specifically, the Network recommends the following:

A. Allowable Activities -- The Network supports the widest possible range of allowable program activities; these are best represented by current YETP provisions. Activities should not be restricted to those currently authorized (i.e., classroom training, work experience, OJT, etc.) but should be expanded to include basic education (particularly for out-of-school youth) and private sector work experience (to be addressed in section IV of this report). With reduced funding levels and a more performance-based system, a fresh approach needs to be taken toward work experience. Work experience will become more valuable and less costly if coupled with remedial education, classroom training or OJT.

B. Fostering Institutional Collaboration -- With a shrinking funding pool, local collaboration is becoming increasingly necessary to insure that limited resources are used as effectively as possible. Collaborative arrangements can be created either through set-aside requirements or through supplemental incentive funding arrangements. The "22% set-aside" under YETP was a good provision and resulted in considerable progress toward improved and strengthened relationships among prime sponsors, schools and community-based service providers. However, as a one-way funding arrangement it lacked the potency to institutionalize programmatic changes in schools or the larger local community. Any future set-aside

provisions should require two-way participation --perhaps "mutual matching" of funds from all parties to a collective effort.

An alternative leverage mechanism which could potentially be even more effective is incentive funding. Under this arrangement, local communities could qualify for national or state supplemental funding awards by demonstrating local institutional collaboration among various youth serving organizations. This approach would encourage key actors to cast aside their turf protection in an attempt to achieve a common goal.

C. Forward Funding -- Practitioners endorse and strongly urge the adoption of forward funding for employment and training programs. Effective partnerships (particularly with schools and private businesses) require rational advance planning to insure a comprehensive and cohesive delivery system. Such planning is virtually impossible under current circumstances where funding allocations are not announced until the second quarter of the fiscal year. Two year forward funding would increase program stability, thereby enabling staff to concentrate more time on program management and administration, the areas of the system that have historically been the weakest. Practitioners firmly believe that this revision in funding strategy could do more to improve the basic operations of youth employment programs than any other single change.

IV. HOW CAN PRIVATE SECTOR INVOLVEMENT BE EXPANDED?

Local practitioners have found that current requirements and restrictions on employment and training activities discourage and limit private sector involvement in their programs. New legislation needs to eliminate these barriers and provide additional incentives for both increasing private sector participation and for increasing the access of youth to jobs in the business community.

Future legislative initiatives need to be guided by six general propositions that emerge from past practitioner experience: a) public/private partnerships are essential to preparing young people for employment; b) it is not enough to expect employers to be consumers of a publicly produced product -- there is an equally important role for private business to play in the "planning" and the "production" processes; c) employers demand youth who have mastered basic academic and work skills; d) a prerequisite for increased public/private partnerships is a strategy that reduces risks and costs to employers; e) employers are generally more attracted to programs that are carefully structured and simple to understand; and f) the private sector is not monolithic -- the incentives and strategies needed to entice the involvement of small employers are different than those needed for large employers.

As practitioners, we endorse an increased role of the business community in all facets of an employment and training system. Specific legislative provisions should include the following:

A. Private sector participation in program planning is essential and needs to be encouraged.

This is particularly true for skill training programs and the development of performance standards. Some Private Industry Council experience and some community college-based vocational education advisory arrangements provide instruction for useful private involvement.

B. Administrative provisions and paperwork requirements need to be minimized and simplified.

This extends to all avenues of private sector involvement from TJTC verification to OJT contractual requirements. Simply put, we must make it easier for private firms to participate.

C. Additional incentives are needed for private firms to participate directly in employment and training programs, thereby increasing job opportunities for disadvantaged youth.

Network members suggest three specific strategies for opening up this system:

- High support private training, which would permit a 100% wage subsidy for a limited duration. Individual subsidy reductions could then be negotiated to take into account each youth's skill acquisition and increased productivity levels. Employers could provide training and be "introduced" to potential employees at no out-of-pocket cost.

- "Reverse OJT" or private sector "outstationing" in which participants are placed at a private sector worksite but remain on the program's payroll for a limited period --perhaps up to 90 days. This approach would afford the employer an opportunity to observe a youth prior to making a commitment to an OJT position or a permanent hire. This would remove additional dis-incentives to employers as well since during this "tryout" period employers would not be liable for fringe benefits, workmen's compensation, unemployment insurance, etc.

Neither of these strategies is intended to give an unfair advantage to private businesses -- they are designed to attract private employers and give them the opportunity to observe a potential member of their workforce without complicated contractual relationships or undue risk.

The third strategy is:

- Broadened eligibility for Targeted Jobs Tax Credits (TJTC) to all youth who meet the eligibility requirements for participation in employment and training programs.

V. WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS AND HOW CAN THEY BE MEASURED?

In order to be most effective, practitioners believe that new legislation must embrace a developmental approach to youth programming which intervenes with youth as early as necessary, serves them as long as appropriate, and prepares them for career-related employment or future education. Simple placement in a short-term job in the secondary labor market is not appropriate for many youth, who need instead to develop competencies needed for more stable employment and long-term economic self-sufficiency.

A performance-based management system can be a useful tool provided that the standards do not encourage working with easier-to-serve youth at the expense of the most disadvantaged. Different target groups cannot be held to uniform cost efficiency levels. Performance standards need to be adjusted to provide equal incentives to serve the most competitively disadvantaged target groups which require program services even if they are more difficult, require longer periods of intervention, or show relatively less immediate payoff. The Network supports the following approach to goals and measures for youth and employment programs:

A. Goals

- The goals of youth programs should be different from the goals of adult programs and should focus on the development of competencies in some combination of the following areas: basic and academic skills, work maturity skills, pre-employment skills and occupational skills.

- Youth who achieve competencies ahead of schedule should be rewarded in some fashion, through a bonus arrangement, higher stipend or wage, or faster "graduation." Program operators need to have positive reinforcement tools at their disposal as well as the threat of sanctions.

- The possibility of performance-based incentives to reward programs which meet or surpass established program goals should be explored again.

B. Performance Measures

- Performance standards for youth programs need to measure success according to the long-term achievement of the above goals, not by overly simple short-term measures such as immediate job placement. Some interim measures are appropriate for tracking progress -- school retention or return, graduating from one step in a sequence of services to another, and the achievement of specific competencies. Only a very few performance standards can be established nationally: most should be left to local discretion.

- Employers should be involved in the determination of local performance standards, particularly in the area of skill training programs.

- National performance standards for program outcomes should be as simple as possible and serve as a means to an end, not as ends in themselves. These standards need to be quantifiable and should be keyed to agreed-upon outcomes. (N.B., Network members have prepared a separate brief report which treats this issue in more depth.)

VI. WHAT POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURES SHOULD BE DEVELOPED?

Network members considered the various service delivery structures that have been proposed over the past several months, including a) the improvement of a system empowering local political jurisdictions; b) the creation of labor market areas to be overseen by private sector councils; and c) developing state-dominated systems responsible for implementing non-categorical bloc grants. These service delivery options were considered in the context of attempting to determine which system would best represent the interests of disadvantaged young people while at the same time

incorporating the recommendations previously discussed.

As practitioners representing school systems, prime sponsors, community agencies and employers, we believe that a system which improves a local political jurisdiction's ability to plan and provide services to youth is the best system. Local control of employment and training programs (planned and operated in response to the demands of the local labor market, the capacities of local institutions, and the needs of the local youth population) is one of the most important principles that must be embodied in future employment and training legislation. To that end, we strongly believe that the interests of young people will be best served by improving, strengthening and upgrading the current locally-based system rather than dismantling this system and replacing it with a new and unproven one. Incorporating the recommendations specified in this paper into a new law would provide the current system with the stability it desperately needs.

A locally-based and administered system is also supported by practitioners for its greater likelihood of accountability, responsiveness, and ability to mobilize other local resources. Local governments can more readily be held accountable, both financially and politically, for their actions in the administration of employment and training programs. Regional labor market boards or other non-governmental structures would, we fear, have little direct accountability for their actions. Local elected officials need to be more immediately responsive to the expressed needs of their community. No other level of government, state or federal, is in a position to be more responsive. Thus the capacity for the mobilization and coordination of local resources and governance structures argues strongly for the continued use of the current delivery system of local, county and state governments. We are especially convinced that the likelihood of useful collaboration among schools, community agencies and local governments is much

greater with a locally-based system. If the historical pattern of "stop-start," "freeze-spend," and "eleventh hour" decision-making can give way to a period of stable funding and programming, increased funding stability, by itself, would dramatically improve program effectiveness.

Refining and strengthening a locally-based system does not mean that there should not be an increased role for states and private employers. Quite the contrary. We have already suggested ways to help solidify public/private partnerships and establish additional incentives for private sector participation. Yet another means would be through the creation of a simple, unified local planning council with majority representation from the private sector. Such a consolidated council would replace the plethora of councils that have existed in the past. The balance of council membership would resemble the best of current Private Industry Councils by including schools, community organizations, organized labor and the client population. To insure that the needs and interests of youth are advanced, we would support the establishment of a functioning Youth Subcommittee within the broader consolidated council.

There are a number of useful and constructive roles that states could perform under this system. States who were not themselves operating entities could serve in a coordinative and monitoring capacity and even become responsible for the awarding of supplemental incentive grants to encourage institutional collaboration, especially between local governments and their school systems, including vocational education. The state could develop an effective leveraging mechanism for fostering the collaboration that is so often sought but so rarely achieved.

VII. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Several suggestions emerged in single Forum meetings or from comments on a draft of this report which deserve mention. Because they were either suggested in writing or in only one or two Forums, most did not enjoy enough discussion to constitute "consensus" recommendations, though they might have, given more debate. A few follow.

Regarding targeting and eligibility:

- It is too easy to forget rural populations when confronted with the sheer numbers and proportion of disadvantaged urban youth. Eligibility and targeting approaches need to take rural populations into account;

- States or local jurisdictions might be allowed to propose an alternative eligibility standard based on local conditions, which could be approved by the Secretary of Labor. Any national income standard ignores local variations in economic conditions (e.g., such disparate factors as Detroit's economic condition and Alaska's higher relative poverty index due to costs of living).

Regarding programs, service deliverers and planning processes:

- If education legislation cannot be directly dovetailed yet, it should be soon. Basic skills instruction needs to be improved in high school through remediation and the development of alternative programs; and

- unless we are to continue to put band-aids on major wounds, basic skills instruction needs to be improved at an earlier age than that envisioned by employment programs;

- post-secondary institutions, especially community colleges, should be specifically included in national legislation and in local service delivery plans as potential providers of education and

skills training services.

- Stipends for participation in training programs should be allowed, but neither mandated nor eliminated. Some lower-cost programs could be developed without stipends; other program approaches require stipends for certain segments of the population.

- Direct participation of youth in program planning and management should be encouraged, and not limited to token membership on planning councils.

Regarding delivery systems options:

- Several representatives of more rural states argued for establishment of a minimum allocation to each state, regardless of population;

- While general consensus was achieved regarding local service delivery, a number of practitioners urged that a rigorous evaluation/accountability procedure be established regardless of the actual delivery system adopted. Both programmatic and political realities demand that the system be able to document its accomplishments. Practitioners can help devise such a system.

Summary

The Youth Policy Forums have demonstrated that practitioners can contribute effectively to the development of future employment and training policies.

The members of the National Youth Pracitioners' Network believe that this front-line experience, combined with up-to-date information, can improve not only the making of policy, but also its link to real implementation. As program operators, local people will eventually be charged with the responsibility for carrying out the provisions and regulations of any new statute.

Practitioners are concerned primarily that the new legislation enable them to carry out their jobs as effectively as possible without unnecessary barriers or obstacles so that the lives of the youth they serve can be filled with the hope and promise of a better tomorrow.

We welcome additional opportunities to provide input into the design of future youth policy. We believe that an ongoing and continous dialogue between those charged with making national policy and those charged with operating local programs is vital if we are to achieve the goal of better youth education and employment programs throughout the country and in each of our communities.

APPENDIX

- Sample Policy Forum agenda
- List of Forum participants
- Background Notes on Youth Unemployment
- Network Background Notes
- Questions and Answers on Youth Practitioners' Network

SAMPLE

YOUTH PRACTITIONERS' NETWORK

YOUTH POLICY FORUM

REGION X - SEATTLE, WASHINGTON
December 10, 1981

Hosted by: The Center for Public Service, Brandeis University
at
The Battelle Institute

8:30- 9:00	Registration
9:00- 9:15	Context and Purpose of Meeting
9:15-10:15	Introductions
10:15-10:30	Coffee Break
10:30-11:30	Who should be served by youth employment programs?
11:30-12:30	Are there new training and education methods which might produce significant improvements in the next few years?
12:30- 2:00	Lunch
2:00- 3:00	How involved is the private sector in youth programs?
3:00- 3:15	Break
3:15- 4:15	What should be the goals of youth programs and how should they be measured?
4:15- 5:00	Closure/Next Steps
5:00- 6:00	Reception
6:00	Adjourn

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YOUTH PRACTITIONERS' NETWORK

BACKGROUND NOTES on YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

How serious is youth unemployment?

There are two parts to the answer: how big is the problem and does it matter - that is, does it have consequences which can or should be remedied. In 1954, the unemployment rate for black and white youth was the same, less than 10%. In August of 1981, slightly under 50% of all black youths looking for jobs were unable to find them. This was during a month of traditionally high employment for youths. Unemployment among white youth was over 15% and over 20% for white youth living in poverty areas.

Youth unemployment for all races has increased in the past 25 years despite substantial increases in the number of jobs in our economy. Black unemployment has skyrocketed in the 1970's - a decade which saw more jobs added to the workforce than any decade in American history. During recessions, black youth lose jobs; during periods of expansion, black youth continue to fall behind.

The participation rate lets us place unemployment rates in perspective. Since 1954, the number of youths interested in working has increased steadily. Nearly 2/3 of all white youth between the ages of 16 and 21 are now employed, part or full-time. This percentage has slipped a bit in recent years, but remains much higher than for minority youth, where only a third of the teenagers are actually working. In other words, only one in three minority youths is able to find a job.

Won't this problem vanish as the workforce grows older? No. First, while the number of teenagers will decline during the 1980's because of the lower birth rate, the percentage of teenagers who are black or Hispanic will increase. Tighter labor markets have not in the past resulted in lower unemployment for minority youth. In Dallas today, for example, unemployment in distressed urban neighborhoods is over 20%, even though Dallas has one of the tightest labor markets in the country.

Second, studies in recent years have shown that periods of unemployment for teenagers do translate into reduced opportunities later in life. Young women and young blacks who are isolated from the labor market during and

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after high school earn less money in their late twenties and experience more idle weeks. Youth who work while in school are more likely to have a job when they graduate. It is easier to find a job if you already have one.

How large is the problem? If black, Hispanic and disadvantaged white youth were to have an employment rate equal to the overall rate for white youth, over 1,000,000 jobs would be needed. In many urban centers, an employed youth is an endangered species. In Houston and New York City, it has been estimated that more youth are employed illegally than in the conventional job market.

Is it just an unemployment problem?

It is misleading to discuss youth unemployment in the same dry manner we bring to the labor market misfortunes of adults. While we argue that a jobless youth is a siphon on the health of the economy, just as an adult is, unemployment for youth is only a symptom. Issues of unemployment cannot be readily disentangled from issues of schooling, crime, poverty, welfare, and so forth.

A few comparative numbers. In Chicago and New York, half of each year's Ninth Graders will drop out without receiving a diploma. Statistically, the chances of being unemployed for dropouts is three times the chance for graduates. Graduation is not enough, of course. Scores on nationwide achievement tests keep going down. Even though more youth, nationally, are getting diplomas than ever before, their value has been wiped out. Major employers, like New York Telephone and United Technologies, report that 90% of their job applicants cannot perform simple reading and math exercises.

Male minority youths in cities like Chicago and Los Angeles have a better than 50% chance of being arrested before the age of 16, nearly a 100% chance by the age of 20. Prisons are nearly bursting as crime escalates in all parts of the country. The cost of an average delinquency program is about $20,000 per year; the cost of building one prison cell is over $100,000. If youth are not in school, not on the job, not involved in our economy and society, where will we find them?

Over 600,000 teenage girls had babies last year; nearly the same number of youths were reported to have run away from home. The arrests of juveniles number in the millions each year. In some areas, 80% of the crime is committed by unemployed youths.

The costs behind these statistics are real. They are measured in the unproductive diversion of tax dollars to pay for prisons, courts, welfare, hospitals, etc. They are measured in the loss of productive capacity from hundreds of thousands of unskilled, intermittently employed people.

Even these numbers mask the reality of the problem. The most destructive effects of unemployment are felt in the most poverty-stricken sections of the country. But all sections of the country experience a related phenomenon - the heavy presence of disaffected teenagers: idle, undisciplined, redundant. While it makes sense to focus federal efforts on areas where all the problems converge, it is foolish to assume that this somehow tackles the problem. Youth feel unnecessary in an increasingly age-fragmented society.

What can be done about it?

The start of an effective approach to youth unemployment has been made in recent years. As of March 1981, about 250,000 youths were enrolled in the youth programs under Title IV-A of CETA. This summer, 850,000 youths were enrolled in the CETA-sponsored jobs. About 44,000 youth live or study in the 150 Job Corps Centers across the country. The Job Corps is the most expensive of these programs, but, at $13,000 per youth, it is still cheaper than the incarceration. At less than $3,000 per youth, the YETP programs alone account for 25% of the jobs needed to align the unemployment rates of poor youth with those of middle-class youth.

The cynicism about CETA should not extend to the youth programs. Even though the mass of data generated by recent demonstration efforts eludes easy synthesis, several key points emerge:

- we now know what elements are necessary to run a good youth employment and education program;
- the school attendance provision of the Entitlements did work - kids did go back to school;
- youth want to work - even when offered jobs at less than the minimum wage, young people snap them up;
- the efforts of youth in publicly created programs result in real output - productive contributions which nearly equal their cost;
- a job, alone, is insufficient - the problem is complex, so the solution demands collaboration among employers, schools and community groups;
- the private sector will get involved, although, so far, the incentives have been modest, poorly marketed, and sometimes ill-conceived.

There is a system of local youth employment and education programs which, amid the confusion which marks CETA, has emerged as a potentially effective vehicle for addressing youth needs. The failures of the demonstration programs have been as instructive as the successes. The result is that we know where improvements should be made: in management, in employer relations, in skill training, in targeting. To eliminate these programs now would be to kill them at the precise point when they can begin to make a difference.

Can't market forces be freed to solve this problem?

Existing youth employment programs cannot bring down the unemployment rate permanently. A simple glance at the economies of Watts or the South Bronx should make clear the obstacles. In fact, programs which mainly aim for job creation are poor ways to help youth. Youth employment programs are a form of capital investment - investment in the capacity of tomorrow's workers to produce for our society. They will be most effective when they are coupled with improvements in the economy, locally and nationally. A skilled youth without a job is like a job without skilled applicants. The equation is complete when both the terms balance.

It is short-sighted to expect a lower minimum wage to solve the problem. It will help, but slightly. Why? First, we already have a sub-minimum wage and it is used where it makes sense to the employer. Second, in those areas with the highest youth unemployment, we also have a sub-minimum, an off-the-record wage, which accounts for a substantial share of the wages paid to youth. Third, the minimum wage will fall anyway, because of inflation. If a lower minimum wage would suddenly cause investors to overlook the other problems of distressed neighborhoods and unskilled workers, then it would suffice.

It is also short-sighted to adhere religiously to the trickle-down theory. As noted, poor communities are remarkably inflexible when it comes to supply and demand. Things are lousy in good times and bad. The market works on a broad basis; it doesn't work on Liberty Street in Miami or in North Philadelphia.

Youth employment programs are that rare case where social intervention makes economic sense.

September, 1981

YOUTH PRACTITIONERS' NETWORK

BACKGROUND NOTES

The Youth Practitioners Network is a voluntary organization of the people who manage youth employment programs for local public schools, for large and small employers, for community agencies, and for state and local governments. Its purpose is to increase the effectiveness of these efforts without increasing their cost. The Network accomplishes this by finding new ways for practitioners to help one another - through direct exchange of information, through seminars, and through joint problem-solving. We are a type of self-help group, built on the unpaid time of our membership and motivated by the common desire to assist youth to find a productive place in the world of work.

The Network has been in existence for over a year. We do not aim to have a membership larger than we can serve. There are nine "regional" network groups, each coordinated by two or three practitioners in those areas. These groups are entirely independent, but receive some money and technical assistance from the Center for Public Service at Brandeis University. Brandeis also coordinates the meetings of the Network's National Planning Committee which meets semi-annually and makes all policy decisions.

Although we are not a political or lobbying group, we recognize that one way local practitioners can improve their effectiveness is by speaking to the people in Washington who design the rules and programs which affect our actions. Too often these policies are made for theoretical reasons which lose their cogency the further one travels from Washington. As James Madison noted, theory has a way of coming unraveled when faced with the complexities of real life. Network members have advocated for greater local control over such programs as CETA, Vocational Education, and CSA. They have offered guidance to policy-makers on the likely implementation obstacles to ideas like a lower youth minimum wage and efforts to increase the private sector's role. They have encouraged reform in school attendance and child labor laws, reductions in federal paperwork, and decategorization of federal funds.

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The main tasks of the Network are not aimed at Washington. For years the people who run programs have complained about the "help" given them by consultants and bureaucrats. The Network is our chance to show that the best and the most cost-effective aid can come from practitioners themselves. Thus, we have established technical assistance exchanges among Network members, created policy forums to debate new ideas, and launched a practitioners institute which can give members access to better management techniques.

The Youth Practitioners Network exists because of the time contributed by our members. It is not a static, professional organization, but an informal, dynamic alliance of local decision-makers. Major continuing funds are provided by foundations and by government. For more information contact Al McMahill, Brenda Lee-Walker, or Erik Butler at 800-343-4705.

September, 1981

National Youth Practitioners' Network

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

January 15, 1982

What is the National Youth Practitioners' Network?

It is an informal, voluntary association of individuals who work in employment and education programs for youth. Helped immensely by a small grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, the idea for the Network has grown over the past two years as a by-product of meetings held by the Center for Public Service at Brandeis University. The Network is not intended to be an advocacy group or to represent any political point of view. It is a group of professionals seeking ways among themselves to improve both their own effectiveness and the quality of the programs they are responsible for in their local communities.

How large is the Network?

Until the Tidewater Conference in December of 1980, the Network remained a small group without any formal organization. In any event, the Network will not become a large association. Current plans are to limit the national membership to 250, evenly distributed across the country and among the major institutions which affect youth: employers, CETA prime sponsors, community agencies, and public schools.

What was the purpose of the Tidewater Conference?

Tidewater was planned as a way to launch a more formal stage of development for the Network. Other meetings have discussed network issues as sidelights to their main agenda. At Tidewater the Network was the main agenda. It was our goal to leave Tidewater with a clear consensus on the need, structure, and organization of the Network, a goal we believe was substantially achieved.

Who planned Tidewater?

The idea for the Network took stronger shape after a meeting held in June of 1980 in Keystone, Colorado. An ad hoc group of people - all of whom had attended earlier meetings in Washington or at Brandeis - spent

two days talking about whether to move the Network idea towards having a life of its own. There were two outcomes of that meeting - the Tidewater Conference and proposals to both the Rockefeller Foundation and Labor Department for funds to start the Network.

What is the status of funding?

The Rockefeller Foundation has given a two-year $180,000 grant to Brandeis University to organize and develop the Network. This grant began in January 1981 and, for the first time, will allow for the active promotion of the Network. A significant share of this grant has been earmarked for a third party evaluation of the Network.

More recently, the Department of Labor provided a grant to Brandeis totaling $370,000 which will, in effect, permit us to apply the Network to tasks of interest to the Department, especially around emerging policy questions and peer assistance. This grant began June 15, 1981 and is currently scheduled to end on June 30, 1982, though we obviously hope that we will be successful enough to warrant continued support. Activities supported by this grant will occur primarily through regionally-based network groups.

What are the regional networks?

From the beginning, we have believed that the goals of the Network could not be accomplished through one national group. There had to be smaller groups oriented to the needs of regions and operating on their own. The national group, then, is really a sort of convention of regional groups, which are now in the process of being established. A goal of Tidewater was to identify someone in each of the ten federal regions who has the energy and the commitment to organize a regional practitioners' network. It will be through each of these independent regional groups that the main activities of the Network will take place.

What are the main activities?

We are looking for more ideas, but for now the main areas in which activities are planned include: peer program assistance, professional development, and policy review. The last one is the easiest to define. It means continuing to create forums, such as Tidewater, through which practitioners can express themselves on issues of youth employment.

In the Fall of 1981 a series of ten regionally based Youth Policy Forums were held which focused on issues of targeting limited resources, determining program strategies, involving the private sector, and monitoring program and client progress. A report of practitioner policy recommendations was subsequently produced and forwarded to both the Department of Labor and key Congressional staff members in both parties. As substantive legislation is introduced into Congress in future months, we intend to reconvene these forums to analyze the content and stay informed about emerging policy options.

What is peer program assistance?

At the very least, it is an idea yet to be tried seriously. Many people express displeasure with the traditional approaches to training and technical assistance taken by a variety of federal departments. Either there is not enough help or it comes in a packaged form which is useful mainly in a "technical" way. Peer program assistance has been proposed in response to two recognitions: (1) the best help on real problems will come from those who are most familiar with them and (2) if practitioners want to see a major change in their situation, they will need to do it themselves.

Peer program assistance has taken many forms. It depends on a pre-existing structure, such as the Network, which can bring people together, build relationships among them and identify areas of mutual strength and weakness. Activities have ranged from an informal telephone call to a visit; from several people solving a common problem to one person walking someone else's staff through a model program; from occasional personnel exchanges to a formal mechanism through which practitioners can evaluate one another's programs.

Funds are available to support this phase of the Network's activities through June of 1982, at which point we hope to have sponsored as many as 75 visits.

How about professional development?

This is a vaguer goal than technical assistance, yet is based on it. That is: if practitioners can help one another, it must be a consequence of their accumulated knowledge and experience. This knowledge and experi-

ence, if analyzed, should be the foundation for determining what kind of preparation is needed for a person to practice the "craft of working with youth." The Network intends to not only provide such training itself, but to cooperate with institutes and organizations already set up for that purpose.

Last Summer, a group of 33 practitioners from eleven states came to Brandeis in teams of three to participate in the first of our Youth Policy and Management Institutes; at this point two additional Institutes are tentatively scheduled for March 28 - April 2 and July 25-30, 1982.

What makes the Network different from other groups?

A better answer to this question will have to await the activities of the next two years. Basically, the National Youth Practitioners' Network is different because (a) its members are all focused on youth employment and education, (b) they are drawn ecumenically from all institutions working with youth, (c) it is not an advocacy or political group, (d) its energies will be concentrated on members helping one another, and (e) it has been created by practitioners and for them.

Where is the National Network located?

The Network is located at the Center for Public Service, Ford Hall, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA 02254. We welcome letters, requests for information, and ideas. If you call 800-343-4705 ask for Al McMahill, Brenda Lee-Walker, or Erik Butler.

What about the regional network groups?

Accompanying this document is a roster of those people who serve on the Network Steering Committee as representatives from each region - we encourage you to contact them for further information on regional network activities which are now being planned.

How can I get involved?

For more specific information on the status of each regional group and the activities they have planned over the next few months, you can either call Brandeis or one of the coordinators in the appropriate region.